



Rep. Laura Ruderman

Committees:

- Health Care
- Technology, Telecommunications & Energy - Vice Chair
- Appropriations

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Representative **Laura Ruderman**

4 5 t h D I S T R I C T R E P O R T

"American Democracy is based on the belief that extraordinary possibilities exist in ordinary people."

— Taegan Goddard & Christopher Riback

Dear Neighbors,

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your representative to the Legislature.

I've had the pleasure of meeting and listening to thousands of people in the 45th District, and you've told me that you want the Legislature to focus on basic issues - the kind of problems that we all talk about at the kitchen table every day: the traffic mess on 520, what the kids are doing in school, and paying the bills.

You may not think of your kitchen-table talk as political discussions, but they are. Those three issues - transportation, education and economics - are what I strongly believe the Legislature should focus on this year, and every year, to make a difference in the everyday lives of citizens. It is my top priority to make sure that we do focus on these issues.

Government can't solve every problem, and shouldn't try, but what it does, it should do well. That means ending traffic jams on our roads and highways, improving our public schools and universities and giving middle-class people a break on their taxes.

This newsletter is a chance for me to tell you what we're doing about those kitchen-table issues in the Legislature. It's also a chance for you to share your opinions and stories - at the end of the newsletter, you'll find a comment card that I hope you take the time to fill out.

Serving the 45th District is very important to me. I'd like to work with you to make our state a better place, and I welcome suggestions on how to better serve you.

Sincerely,

Representative Laura Ruderman



Education and economics

- **High-tech means high pay** - We stand on the edge of a huge shift in the economy from an industrial age, dominated by machines, to a global economy, dominated by information. There's a clear link between high-tech skills and high-paying jobs. Businesses with the best brainpower will thrive.

During the switch from an agricultural economy to the Industrial Age, Governor John Rogers, in 1899, stood up and proposed the radical step of expanding public education to 12th grade, so that our state's workers could compete in the new Industrial Age.

Today, our public education system requires similar bold reforms so that our workers and businesses can prosper in the Information Economy.

Here are key reforms now before the Legislature:

- **Promise Scholarships** - A college education should be available to all citizens willing to study hard and make the grade. The \$3,000 scholarships would automatically go to the top 15 percent of students who graduate from any high school in our state.
- **Technology in schools** - Our children cannot prepare for the 21st century with tools and technology from the 1950's. That's why I support efforts to ensure that every student in Washington has access to the kind of modern technology that they'll be using in the workforce. Key proposals before the Legislature this year include the K-20 network, which is connecting every public school, college and university in the state to the Internet; and a hub for the next generation of the Internet at the University of Washington, where speedy Internet II connections will give opportunities to students and businesses alike.
- **Workforce training** - There are more than 7,000 high-paying technology jobs that businesses can't fill because there aren't workers with technical skills. Another 60,000 such jobs will be created in our state in the next three years. I support plans to train Washington state workers for those jobs at our community colleges and four-year universities. This will ensure that our workers have those family wage jobs and our businesses have the people they need to compete.



Property Taxes

Year after year, the taxes of average citizens keep going up. This seems to defy logic, since all we hear about from politicians in D.C. is that the federal budget is balanced, and Washington state's budget has grown quite slowly compared to our booming economy and increasing population.

There are two reasons why your taxes have gone up:

1. **It rolls downhill** - Cities, counties and schools used to get more funding from the state and federal government. The state used to pay most of the cost of new schools; now, the state only pays one-third of that cost. We pay the rest through local property taxes! The only avenue schools have to raise money is to put property tax levies on the ballot.
2. **Who got the breaks** - During the last four years, the Legislature gave away \$2 billion in tax breaks. Who got the money? Not average citizens like you or me. While property taxes were cut by more than \$500 million, homeowners saw a drop in the state property taxes of about \$13 a year. And most people still saw higher property tax bills because of voter-approved levies for schools and local services, such as firefighting and law enforcement.

So what are we going to do about this? Here are proposals that I am working on:

- **School construction funding** - The shift in state responsibility to local government is a real factor in your increased taxes. That's why I'm supporting the recommendations of the bipartisan School Construction Task Force, which has a plan that would use money sitting in a budget surplus to build new schools and offer citizens \$90 million in targeted tax relief. It could mean a real savings for homeowners. I also introduced House Bill 1079, which restores our fair share of local school construction funding.
- **Homestead exemption** - I am working with other lawmakers to craft a homestead tax break. Citizens would pay zero state property taxes on the first \$62,000 in value of their homes. For senior citizens and others who have put down roots and do not plan on selling their homes, the increases in their properties assessed value, and their tax bill, is a huge burden. A homestead tax break would help lift that burden.
- **Economic Development** - Biotech is an important new industry bringing high-wage jobs to our state, but new companies in this field often have trouble getting money to build their own laboratories. That's why I introduced House Bill 1631, which would provide tax incentives for the construction of buildings for biotech facilities.

From the right, Representatives Jim Kastama (D-Puyallup) and Representative Ruderman look on as Mary Selecky, Acting Secretary of the Department of Health reads a proclamation from Governor Locke declaring February 15 as "Breast Cancer Awareness Day." Jan Slawson, board president of the Susan G. Komen Foundation Puget Sound Affiliate (on the far left) looks on as well. Rep. Ruderman's resolution honoring the foundation for leading the fight against breast and cervical cancer passed through the House of Representatives later that day.



Transportation

If there's one thing that we all agree drives us crazy, it's sandwiching a long day of hard work between staring at bumpers during stop-and-go traffic.

While we can't pave our way out of the problem - there isn't enough money or empty space - there are some critical local choke points that need to be fixed. We need both short-term and long-term plans to solve the daily grind of traffic gridlock.

- **Short term solutions** - In the next five years, several critical projects are needed in our district, including
 - Interstate 405 improvements
 - safety improvements to SR 202 from Lake Sammamish Parkway to Sahalee Way,
 - and the expansion of the SR 202 to I-520 interchange.
- **Long term answers** - There are creative and inexpensive solutions to traffic gridlock that are working in other states. We need to focus on making better use of mass transit, carpools and alternative ways of getting to work. Additionally, we should encourage businesses to use flexible work hours or telecommuting.



Keeping in Touch

Your voice matters. The opinions of citizens in the 45th District are far more important to me than anything the lobbyists and special interest groups in Olympia have to say.

That's why I'll be spending at least one weekend every month walking from porch to porch to talk to neighbors and listen to their stories or concerns.

I want to encourage you to speak your mind, to stand up and be counted. I strongly believe that our unique history of democracy needs active, informed and involved citizens.

If you have questions or comments about any issue before the Legislature, or if you need help in dealing with a state agency, please contact my office. My legislative aide, Amit Ranade, will be the friendly voice on the other end of the line. He and I both strongly believe in responding to citizens quickly and thoroughly.

You can reach my office at the House of Representatives by phone, fax, e-mail or regular mail. If you simply wish to comment on an issue, please call the toll-free Legislative Hotline.

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Regular mail: Rep. Laura Ruderman, 341 JLOB, Olympia, WA 98504

Electronic Democracy

Our democracy is strong because of everyday people who take the time to be informed and involved about issues. I'm proud that our state has a long history of active citizens, and that the state Constitution established a part-time Legislature made up of citizen-lawmakers, not professional politicians.

The World Wide Web offers an incredible variety of tools for citizens who want to stay informed and active about their democratic government. If you don't have access at home, many local libraries have computers with access to the web.

- **Legislature** - www.leg.wa.gov

Everything you could want to know about the state Legislature, including information about bills, local lawmakers and the schedule for the House and Senate.

My home page is at www.leg.wa.gov/house/members/d45_2.htm

You can e-mail me directly at ruderman_la@leg.wa.gov

- **State Agencies** - access.wa.gov/government/awstate.asp

A comprehensive list of agencies from Access Washington's web site.

- **TVW** - www.tvw.org

This is the cable channel devoted to public affairs in Washington state. TVW is on Channel 29 in Kirkland, Channel 27 in Redmond, and Channel 59 in Woodinville. Those without cable can use the TVW web site to access audio and video coverage of action on the House and Senate floor, or any committee hearing, along with special events. TVW is, in fact, the largest repository of streaming video and audio in the world.

Town Hall Information

Update on legislative action, discussion on issues surrounding education

Saturday, March 20

10:00 - 11:30

**Rockwell Elementary
School Library**

11125 162nd NE, Redmond

1:30 - 3:00

**Cherry Valley Elementary
School Library**

26701 NE Cherry Valley Road, Duvall



Please
place
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stamp
here



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Speaking Out

Please tell me whether you think each of the following issues should be a top priority for the Legislature this year, a low priority, or none at all.

	Top Priority	Low Priority	Not A Priority
Improving the education system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reforming health care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fixing traffic gridlock	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tax relief for homeowners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Protecting the environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fighting crime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Personal Updates

If you would like to receive issue updates from me via e-mail, please check the following box and provide your e-mail address. Also, please indicate the issue(s) you are interested in following during this legislative session.

☐ E-mail address

☐ Issue(s)

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